

# **City of Newton**

## **Crime Prevention Commission**

### **Mission Statement**

The City of Newton Crime Prevention Commission, established in the late 1960's, is an organization of civic and business leaders committed to focusing attention on the quality of community living through improved safety and security initiatives. It operates through research, collaboration, citizen programs, leadership and advocacy. Membership in the group ranges widely across the business, education, civic, law enforcement and legal communities. Our guiding principle is to work collaboratively with other City of Newton stakeholders toward reducing and preventing crime and enhancing public safety. There is considerable pride, of course, in being consistently voted as among the safest, in some years the safest, city in the United States. Nevertheless, members engage in meaningful agenda building each year to implement or support programs and services which address developing problems of concern. In the near term, interest is focused on such matters as:

- **Hate Crimes and Bias Incidents** – The Commission is pledged to be proactive in support of programs and legislation designed to prevent hate crimes and bias incidents. It recognizes that many bias incidents, though not all rising to the level of criminality, also need to be vigorously discouraged. Such offensive acts may involve physical assault, damage to property, bullying, harassment, verbal abuse/insults, offensive graffiti and/or written messages (hate mail). In the United States, frequently reported bias motivations have included anti-black, anti-white, Jewish, gay, Muslim, Asian, Native American, and Hispanic sentiments.
- **Domestic Violence** - The Commission is pledged to be proactive in support of activities that center on learning and teaching others about violence against women. It monitors various government agencies to discover how they can be made more effective within the community; promotes responsible citizen anti-violence programs; and supports the providing of accurate information for the public and the news media. Members are also concerned with the adequacy of shelters, legal aid and other services for girls and women at risk, and counseling/rehabilitation for perpetrators. Abuse can be physical, mental, and/or emotional. Violence against anyone in any form is a wrong, whether the abuser is a family member, a date, a current or past spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend, an acquaintance, or a stranger. Unfortunately, violence against women in the family has long been considered a private matter by bystanders, including neighbors, the community and government, yet such private matters have a tendency to become public tragedies. People need to learn how to reduce the risk of becoming a victim. The Commission supports appropriate measures in the field of education to modify bad patterns of conduct among some men and women.
- **Elder Fraud** – The Commission is pledged to be proactive about better informing the population to ensure that older Newtonians will live with dignity, integrity,

independence, and without abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Being informed is the best defense against the many scammers and fraudsters who are out to rob seniors of hard-earned income and assets. Sophisticated and sneaky malfeasors can trick even the smartest folks. The Commission supports programs to help people learn how to spot their scams and how to refuse and report them. Often seniors do not have enough information to protect themselves so they must take the time to be educated on how to recognize the pitches that scammers make, and to know the latest twist on the scam that's been around a while. Once they've seen the scam, they need to report it to law enforcement authorities so that others will know enough to avoid falling into the same traps. Members are committed to work with The National Center on Elder Abuse. This national resource disseminates elder abuse information to the public, and provides technical assistance and training to community-based organizations.

- Youthful Offenders – The Commission is pledged to be proactive in support of programs designed to prevent and remedy youthful bad behavior. It will work with the Youth Commission and the Newton Public Schools to advocate formal activities such as Restorative Justice (healing). Offensive acts which invite some form of healing may involve physical assault, damage to property, bullying, harassment, verbal abuse/insults, offensive graffiti and/or written messages (hate mail). Restorative justice emphasizes repairing the harm. Of course, it is not a substitute for appropriate police and prosecutorial activity when warranted. It is simply something different. The purpose is to heal through cooperative processes, which include all stakeholders. When victims, offenders and community members meet, the results can be transformational. Such programs are characterized by creating opportunities to collectively discuss bad behavior and its aftermath. One way this is done is the “restorative circle” where all involved parties tell their side of the story respectfully in a structured format. The circle has assumed prominence as a preferred approach for working with children and youth at risk.
- Unsafe Use of Cell Phones – The Commission is pledged to be proactive about a remedy for obvious driver inattention as a leading factor in crashes where hand-held cell phone use and texting are some of the most common driver distractions. Under consideration are suggestions to call for state and/or local action to ban non-emergency hand-held cell phone/texting for drivers; to call for media campaigns to alert the public to the dangers of distracted driving; to call for model policies to ban non-emergency hand-held cell phone/texting by public employees (except police officers) driving on government business; to call for private sector action to ban non-emergency hand-held cell phone use/texting by private employees driving for business purposes; and to call for parental action to set a good example for children by not using a cell phone while driving.
- Child Fingerprinting – The Commission is pledged to be proactive in continuing its program of child fingerprinting. Every parent has experienced the panic of not knowing where their child is, if only for a minute. Each day children wander off

in department stores, supermarkets, amusement parks, campgrounds, and even from their own backyards. Thankfully, most are quickly recovered. Yet even with the best parental care, children are reported missing. Fortunately, many lost and abducted children can be recovered if parents immediately provide police with a complete record of identification. The Commission has traditionally provided a service where ink fingerprinting has periodically been made available to requesting parents. It will also support programs that provide newer software based fingerprinting. Parents feel more secure knowing they have their child's information on hand if needed.

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